

**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

Claim 1 (Withdrawn): An information processing apparatus for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising:

request means for requesting a first inspector to study the target case; and  
detection means for detecting access to a database relating to the target case by the first inspector.

Claim 2 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

report means for reporting a detection result obtained by said detection means to a requester who has requested the first inspector to study the case.

Claim 3 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein

said report means checks an access state by the first inspector at predetermined time intervals, and issues a predetermined reminder when no access is detected a predetermined time after the request.

Claim 4 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

suspension means for suspending a request from a requester who has requested the first inspector to study the case at an instruction of the requester.

Claim 5 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising:

re-request means for requesting a second inspector different from the first inspector at an inspection of the requester to accept a request of a requester who has requested the first inspector to study the case.

Claim 6 (Withdrawn): An information processing method for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising the steps of:

requesting a first inspector to study the target case; and

detecting access to a database relating to the target case by the first inspector

Claim 7 (Withdrawn): An program storage medium storing a program for realizing an information processing method for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising:

a code for requesting a first inspector to study target case; and

a code for detecting access to a database relating to the target case by the first inspector.

Claim 8 (Withdrawn): An information processing apparatus for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising:

a table relating to organization information; and

management means for selectively performing by referring to said table a first study management mode in which the target case is studied through a predetermined path, and

a second study management mode in which an inspector who inspects the target case sequentially requests a subsequent inspector to study the case.

Claim 9 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein  
said table relating to the organization information indicates a hierarchical management structure in a company.

Claim 10 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 8, further comprising:  
a study path pattern table storing a plurality of patterns of study paths for the first study management mode.

Claim 11 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein  
in the second study management mode, a request for study is issued by specifying a name of an inspector without using said table relating to the organization information.

Claim 12 (Withdrawn): An information processing method for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising the steps of:  
referring to a table relating to organization information; and  
performing a managing step by selectively performing based on said referring step a first study management mode in which the target case is studied through a predetermined path, and a second study management mode in which an inspector who inspects the target case sequentially requests a subsequent inspector to study the case.

Claim 13 (Withdrawn): A program storage medium storing a program for realizing an information processing method for studying a target case by communicating information through a network, comprising:

a code for referring to a table relating to organization information; and

a code for realizing a managing step by selectively performing based on said referring process a first study management mode in which the target case is studied through a predetermined path, and a second study management mode in which an inspector who inspects the target case sequentially requests a subsequent inspector to study the case.

Claim 14 (Withdrawn): An information processing apparatus for generating a document relating to a patent application by communicating information through a network, comprising:

association means for dividing a patent application procedure into a plurality of steps, and associating a reference document used in generating a document in step units with a due date of generation of the document; and

management means for managing generation of the document.

Claim 15 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein

said plurality of steps contain an application and a rejection reason response.

Claim 16 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein

said management means manages generation of the document by making links to a management database for item management and a document database for document management.

Claim 17 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein

said management means manages generation of the document by defining a virtual file in a network.

Claim 18 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein

a timing of generating a file is defined in said step units relating to the virtual file.

Claim 19 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein

a process performed when a file is generated is defined in said step units relating the virtual file.

Claim 20 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein

a timing of extinguishing a file is defined in said step units relating to the virtual file.

Claim 21 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein

a process performed when a file is extinguished is defined in said step units relating the virtual file.

Claim 22 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
a related document is defined in said step units relating to the virtual file.

Claim 23 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
a study and approval path is defined in said step units relating to the virtual file.

Claim 24 (Withdrawn): The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein  
said virtual file can be copied, and simultaneously distributed through a network  
using a plurality of paths.

Claims 25 and 26 (Cancelled).

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~~Claim 27 (Currently amended): An information processing apparatus for accumulating  
technical documents relating to a patent application, comprising:  
accumulation means for accumulating a related technical document ~~including a~~  
~~corresponding foreign application~~ for the patent application; and  
display control means for displaying a list of technical documents of a said  
patent application and a corresponding foreign application of said patent application  
accumulated in said accumulation means, in case of displaying a list of technical documents of  
said patent application.~~

Claim 28 (Original): The information processing apparatus according to claim 27,  
wherein

said display control means displays a flag indicating whether or not a prior art disclosure procedure has been performed on the technical document.

Claim 29 (Original): The information processing apparatus according to claim 27,  
wherein

said display control means displays descriptions indicating correspondence between the technical document and a rejection reason.

Claim 30 (Original): The information processing apparatus according to claim 27,  
wherein

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said display control means displays a list of applications by which the technical document has been cited relating to the technical document.

Claim 31 (Currently amended): An information processing method for accumulating technical documents relating to a patent application, comprising the steps of:

accumulating a related technical document ~~including a corresponding foreign application~~ for the patent application; and

displaying and controlling a list of technical documents of a said patent application and a corresponding foreign application of said patent application accumulated in said accumulation step, in case of displaying a list of technical documents of said patent application.

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Claim 32 (Currently Amjended): A program storage medium storing a program for realizing an information processing method for accumulating technical documents relating to a patent application, comprising the steps of:

a code for realizing an accumulation step of accumulating a related technical document ~~including a corresponding foreign application~~ for the patent application; and

a code for realizing a displaying and controlling ~~step of displaying~~ a list of technical documents of a said patent application and a corresponding foreign application of said patent application accumulated in said accumulation step, in case of displaying a list of technical documents of said patent application.